

1089

March 17, 2015

Honorable Representatives and Senators
Connecticut General Assembly
Hartford, CT
RE: SB 1089 (sections 23-29)

Dear Members of the Connecticut General Assembly:

This is to respectfully urge you to support SB 1089 (sections 23-29) licensure for behavior analysts in Connecticut.

Even as a fiscally conservative libertarian that generally opposes government regulation, I enthusiastically endorse this bill because it will help protect consumers of behavior analytic services in Connecticut. Currently, there are no Connecticut guidelines for parents, school districts, and other individuals to identify qualified practitioners of applied behavior analysis (ABA), and consumers are left to their own means to do so. While the Behavior Analyst Certification Board is an excellent way to ensure industry standards and is a great vetting system for consumers, its standards are not established within Connecticut State Law.

Like medicine, and even more so than most other subfields of psychology, ABA is a well-established discipline with an extensive body of scientific research validating its efficacy. Other professions obviously, and rightfully, require licensure within Connecticut. The application of the science of ABA to individuals, especially our most vulnerable, children diagnosed with autism, individuals with developmental disabilities, and students with learning disabilities should require it as well. I think even barbers require licensure within our state. Why would we allow anyone to apply a scientific intervention to people's behavior without requiring a license?

As a Professor of Psychology at Naugatuck Valley Community College, I created an Applied Behavior Analysis certificate program to encourage undergraduates to further their study of ABA to help meet the incredible demand for behavior analysts in Connecticut. One of our recent graduates shared an immensely sad yet touching story about trying to find appropriate and effective treatment for her son who had been diagnosed with autism. For years she and her son attempted several non-scientific methodologies and scams until she discovered ABA. She described the process as "eating glass" because she, as most parents would be, was willing to do whatever it took to help her son.

Families should not have to go through "eating glass" and placing their faith, time, and money into non-evidence based methodologies or scams. Their children deserve

effective ABA treatment, and parents and consumers should absolutely have a means of clearly knowing that the State of Connecticut has identified qualified practitioners of applied behavior analysis via licensure.

Economics is obviously an issue you will have to consider regarding the proposed bill. Thousands of Connecticut children receiving Medicaid are currently not eligible for services provided by Board Certified Behavior Analysts because licensure is required for Medicaid. If the State does not require licensing, those underserved children will continue to be at a greater disadvantage. Connecticut will also not be able to re-coup Medicaid costs from the federal government for these services without licensure. In addition, while the cost of licensing will likely, and hopefully, remain low, Connecticut residents may need to seek the services of behavior analysts licensed in Massachusetts and New York instead of keeping the revenue of those services within our state's economy if Connecticut does not require the licensure of behavior analysts.

Again, I strongly and respectfully urge you to support SB 1089 (sections 23-29).

Sincerely,

Lawrence James Venuk, BCBA
Professor of Psychology
Naugatuck Valley Community College